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THE BUNTLING BALL

A GRÆCO-AMERICAN PLAY

A SOCIAL SATIRE

Edgar Fawcett

ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. D. WELDON



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FUNK & WAGNALLS

NEW YORK

1885

LONDON

10 AND 12 DEY STREET

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PERSONS OF THE PLAY.

ALONZO BUNTLING.

ANASTASIA BUNTLING.

JANE BUNTLING.

LEANDER BRIGGS.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

THE BUTLER.

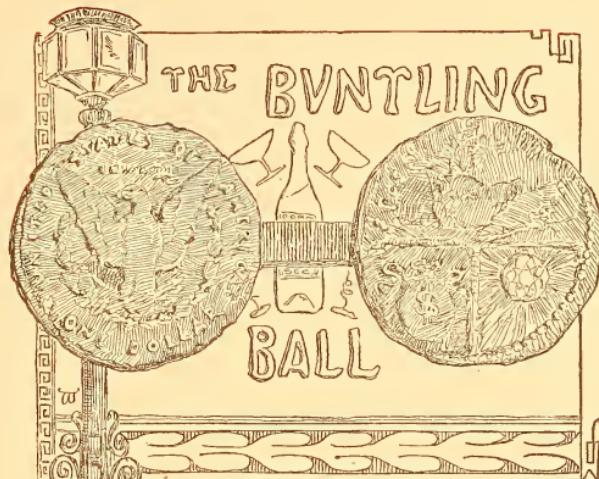
TWO GUESTS.

A REPORTER.

Chorus of { KNICKERBOCKER YOUNG MEN,
MANEUVERING MAMMAS,
SOCIAL STRUGGLERS,
BELLES,
WALL-FLOWERS,
GOSSIPERS,
ANGLOMANIACS,
GLUTTONS.

Ούδεν γὰρ ἀνθρώποισιν οἶνον ἄργυρος
κακὸν νόμισμ' ἔβλαστε. τοῦτο καὶ πόλεις
πορθεῖ, τόδ' ἀνδρας ἐξανίστησιν δόμων·
τόδ' ἐκδιδάσκει καὶ παραλλάσσει φρένας
χρηστὰς πρὸς αἰσχρὰ πράγμαθ' ἵστασθαι
βροτῶν·
πανουργίας δ' ἔδειξεν ἀνθρώποις ἔχειν,
καὶ παντὸς ἔργου δυσσέβειαν εἰδέναι.

SOPHOCLES, *Ant.*, 295-301.



MRS. BUNTLING.

ANASTASIA BUNTLING, faithful
spouse
Of stout Alonzo, potentate
in Pork,

Westward return with lord and loving child
Across Atlantic's many-sounding deep,
Borne safe between the stanch Cunarder's ribs,
Wave-furrowing, tempest-baffling, huge of bulk.

Long was our stay in European lands,
And frequent were the marvels that we met,
Whereof in ample text, with patient skill,
Already the wise Baedeker hath told :
Art-galleries, damp cathedrals, bad hotels,
Innumerable ruins, mountains vast,
Dishonest couriers and vivacious fleas.

Things of great price we purchased as we roamed,
Wrought by men famed with chisel or with brush—
Rare statues, pictures, bronzes, good to range
In sumptuous chambers when transpontine shores
Would claim us ; but for me, my chief delight
Was gathering varied garments, fold on fold
Of beauteous texture, frilled and furbelowed
In many a fantasy of sweet device ;
The last fair whims of fashion's dainty mood,
Expensive, hateful to my husband's purse.
Nor me alone this fond pursuit engrossed,
But also her, my daughter, still a maid,
White-handed, marriageable, golden-tressed.
So Jane and I together have brought home

A precious quantity of splendid gear,
Impervious to Alonzo's noisy wrath,
Impervious to the tariff's tyrant fee,
Impervious to the envy of sly foes,
Impervious to all else but our own aims
Of self-adornment and superior style.
For she is pitifully low of soul
Who values not the holy claims of dress,
Nor worships at her mirror's polished shrine
In attitudes of sacerdotal awe.
I hold that woman most delectable
Who walks in paths beloved of her *modiste*,
Nor sins by wanton scorn of stay or flounce,
The proper trail of skirt, fit set of sleeve.
Nay, she alone hath heed of worthy ends,
Pays vanity its lawful homage, lives
A reverent votary of self-esteem,
And dying passes with calm vogue to where
After life's fitful fever she sleeps swell . . .
But now the chandeliers are all ablaze,
O'ertwined with smilax, and the mantels bloom

With balmy roses, rare, one dollar each,
In this our grand Fifth Avenue abode,
Leased for a twelvemonth. From Chicago we,
Primarily, but here have paused awhile,
To test the social pleasures of New York.
What triumphs we shall win or what shall miss
We know not, for the future none may read
Of purblind men, and all fate's ways are dark.
But look, my daughter comes, with six bouquets,
Sent by herself, a shape superbly clad,
Her lustrous little slipper gleaming neat
Below her garb's pale miracle of taste,
And over all her gold hair, coiled and curled
In architectural complexity.

JANE.

Mamma, beloved with filial tenderness,
Reveal if in my costume any flaw
Offends thee; for thy good opinion
I cherish as dry leaves the slant fresh rain.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Daughter, alike my comfort and my pride,
Put faith in this frank thing I clothe with speech:
Unflawed is thine attire, and thou, sweet child,
Beamest a star of modish maidenhood.

JANE.

Most glad am I; such words bring grateful peace:
Lo, now, it is almost eleven o'clock.
Our invitations named the hour of nine,
Which meant eleven; the guests will soon arrive.

MRS. BUNTLING.

See, child, your honored father comes this way.
Displeased he looks, as one who wears with pain
Apparel irksome to rebellious limbs,
Close-clinging pantaloon and tight dress-coat.

MR. BUNTLING.

Hear me, O Anastasia, headstrong wife,
A web of snares about thine husband's feet.

So much this high stiff collar frets my neck,
I do avow I will not wear it more.
Ah, woe is me, that am so poor being rich !

MRS. BUNTLING.

That man is poor who fears to spend his wealth.

MR. BUNTLING.

Hard is the task to squeeze good gold from Pork.

MRS. BUNTLING.

O word abominable ! Name it not !

MR. BUNTLING.

Fain would I dine at noon and sup at six.

MRS. BUNTLING.

With such low tastes from Europe you return ?

MR. BUNTLING.

What's Europe but a nest of snobs and fools ?

MRS. BUNTLING.

Refrain from such mad phrase, lest thou be heard!

MR. BUNTLING.

By whom? By guests who know nor me nor thee?

MRS. BUNTLING.

Soon shall I know them. Money rules New York.

MR. BUNTLING.

Nay, I have heard of Knickerbockers proud.

MRS. BUNTLING.

They once were proud; now money is their god.

MR. BUNTLING.

'Tis good to trace from Peter Stuyvesant.

MRS. BUNTLING.

'Tis good to sup on terrapin and duck.

MR. BUNTLING.

They, too, have purses fat; they will not come.

MRS. BUNTLING.

I fear not this. Five millions are thy gain.

MR. BUNTLING.

The papers cried me down as upstart cad.

MRS. BUNTLING.

They did ; no more they do so ; I have paid.

MR. BUNTLING.

Bribe as thou wilt ; the Press will say its say.

MRS. BUNTLING.

The Press is bought ; all scribblers have their price.

MR. BUNTLING.

O subtly wise of women ! I succumb !

JANE.

Mamma ! Papa ! Cease wrangling ! Lo, our guests !

MR. BUNTLING.

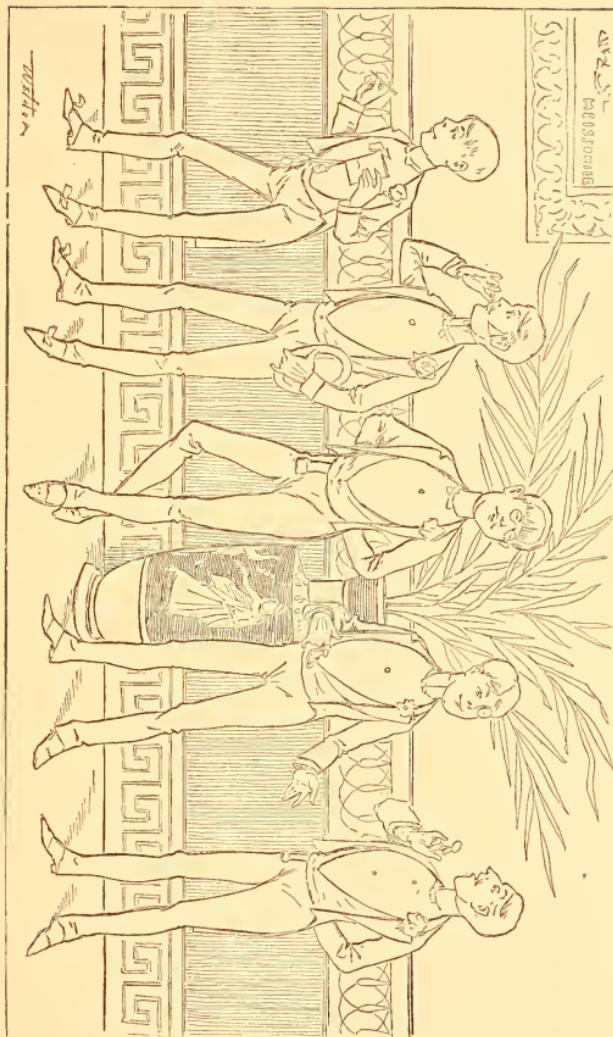
True, they are here. I fondly had supposed
That they to Anastasia's bold "At Home"

Would not respond. Yet greatly have I erred,
For one by one and two by two they troop
In through the portals of our drawing-room.
They know not Anastasia, nor yet Jane,
But spite of this they nimbly bow and smile.
O proud New York, that wast New Amsterdam,
How art thou fallen away from dignity !
Methinks thy Battery and thy Bowling Green
Should split in angered earthquake at thy shame !
Thou, too, indignant Peter, shouldst arise,
A shade with slim clay pipe and ligneous leg,
To lay thy broad staff on the ungrateful heads
Of these thy base descendants, them that love
Gross pelf and pander to the parvenu !
For such am I, even such, and better far
The laboring Scythia's westward-pointed prow
Nor me nor mine had hither borne unscathed
Through the strait Narrows; but that either strand
Had clashing met, and whelmed off Sandy Hook
The great ship's vigor in tumultuous waves !
Thus were averted this unseemly Ball,

Its hollow and absurd extravagance
Checked by the grim economy of death !

CHORUS OF KNICKERBOCKER YOUNG MEN.

Old man, do not be nonsensical
In your views about New York ;
You are needlessly forensical
For a potentate in Pork !
Why not recollect with gratitude
That we throng your mansion wide,
And express no moral platitude
Upon Knickerbocker pride ?
Since the days when dull old Trinity
Was a temple far up town,
And a girl was thought divinity
If she owned but one silk gown ;
Since the days when each festivity
They would all by twelve forsake,
And the dominant proclivity
Was for lemonade-and-cake ;



Since the days when aristocracy
 Of the gender known as male,
Would esteem it vain plutocracy
 To exploit a swallow-tail ;
Since the days when custom's manacle
 Was a bond of rigid force,—
Since the days thus puritanical,
 We have altered things, of course.
For the years are cruel pillagers,
 As they lay old fashions low,
And to live like simple villagers
 Is no longer *comme il faut*.
Our progenitors (peace be with them !)
 Were a very stupid lot,
And so little we agree with them
 That we imitate them not.
They were certainly respectable,
 As with pride we now declare,
But we find it more delectable
 If we draw the line just there.
For to fling aside all flattery,

And to speak as hits the mark,
They were narrow as the Battery
When compared with Central Park.
And if now they had their say to us,
They would turn us all, we fear,
Into office-clerks, and pay to us
Hardly anything a year.
As a crowded public gallery
To a soft orchestral chair,
Is the youth with slender salary
To the dandy debonair.
We delight in glossy carriages,
We delight in garments new ;
We delight in wealthy marriages,
Though the bride's blood be not blue.
We enjoy the fumes and essences
Of cigars whose brands excel ;
We adore the effervescences
That in brandy-and-soda dwell.
We abominate proximity
To the rules that fret and irk ;

We detest with unanimity
Any earthly kind of work.
And the only bonds endurable
To the class we represent,
Are the sort of bonds procurable
At from five to eight per cent.

MR. BUNTLING.

What men are these that so alertly tell
Their follies over, like monastic beads?
Expansive spread the bosoms of their shirts,
Each one a faultless oval, studded bright
With gems of price, while snowy at their throats,
Below the collar's high pale palisade,
Nestles the formal tie of virgin lawn;
Yet these, I deem, are not the sturdy race
Our bold Republic meant to bear for sons.

MRS. BUNTLING.

I pray, Alonzo, you will circulate
Freely among our guests, nor stand aloof

Muttering moralities that ill consort
With festal hours, and mock their merry lapse.

MR. BUNTLING.

Nay, Anastasia, these are not my guests.
Even as a cat in a strange garret, I !
Even as a fish that leaves his liquid realm !
Already thrice my heated countenance
With handkerchief have I perspiring mopped.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Mop thou not thus again. 'Tis execrable.

MR. BUNTLING.

The crowded floors grow hot. Me wretchedly
My tight habiliments annoy. With dread
I move each arm lest I should crack a seam.
Ah ! would that I were standing, free of limb,
In some salubrious bar-room of Broadway,
With amber Bourbon at my elbow placed,
And jovial company on either hand,
The men I love, rare comrades brisk at tales,

Themselves as I self-made and proud of this,
Plebeian, frank, commercial, hating shams,
Nor quite indifferent to the price of pork !

FIRST GUEST.

What think you thus far of the Bunting Ball?

SECOND GUEST.

I like it not. I would we had not come.

FIRST GUEST.

Nay, wife, thou art too ready to condemn.

SECOND GUEST.

Nay, husband, it is infamously mixed.
True, there are people here whom I have seen
At most select assemblages of old.
But thou and I should be particular,
Nor tempt the wayward Fates by reckless deeds.
Still are we on the threshold, as you know,
Of good society; though thy name has grown
A tower and watchword of Monopoly,

Thy millions have provoked important gibes
From that loud sheet, *The Morning Slanderer*,
Thus aiding thee and me to reign erewhile
As haughty leaders. Peradventure, too,
When Spring's first shy bud breaks, thou shalt
 become
A member of the sacred Union Club,
By no stern black-ball contravened, for there
Monopolists are loved, and willing doors
On easy hinges to their advent swing.
But we have erred in coming to this Ball,
Since our position still is perilous. . . .
Let us get hence; the revel yet is young.

MR. BUNTLING.

“Let us get hence” . . . what word was that I caught?
Ah me! if I should slip on stealthy foot
Out at mine own door, and so gain the sweet
Municipal starlight, and with glad gait seek
That bright hotel they name the Hoffman House!
There could I brace my sinking courage well

With one big genial draught, and thence return
Ere Anastasia guessed . . . Fate wills ; I go !

MRS. BUNTLING.

What man is here, scarce clad in seemly garb,
Soliciting my heed with sidelong loók ?

A REPORTER.

Lady, thy lowly servitor am I,
Reporter on the *Morning Slanderer*.
My manuscript is here. . . Wouldst read and give
Approval ere it speeds to public print ?

MRS. BUNTLING.

'Tis well. Draw closer back, below the spray
Of this green-shadowing cactus near the arch.
Now reach thy hand, and let my rapid gaze
Devour what thou hast writ . . . Ah, well indeed
Thou hast earned thy wage, good henchman of the
Press !

I like thy florid language, and I like
Thine accurate description of my robe.



“The Buntling Ball a wonderful success . . .”
“New York’s *élite* all gathered in great throng
To welcome home a brilliant social queen . . .”

“ Miss Jane, the only daughter, dressed in blue,
With pearls and sapphires on her creamy neck . . . ”

“ Then, too, the stately flawless-mannered host,
Mr. Alonzo Buntling, with a smile
Of salutation exquisite for all . . . ”

Ah, thou hast admirably done! Enough;
Seek, ere thou goest, the butler; him command
To give thee of thy fill in Pommery Sec
And whatsoever viand thy palate craves.
Eat, drink; it is thy rightful meed. Farewell.

REPORTER.

Lady, I thank thee. Journalism bows
To Opulence and Beauty.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Thank me, sir,
No thanks, but quaff and feast with happy heart;
And may the awful future hold for thee
An editorial chair.

REPORTER.

O ecstasy!

Deep in my breast henceforth I wear that hope.

MRS. BUNTLING.

So wear it. None may truly prophesy.

Men are but sportive drift on seas of chance.

CHORUS OF MANEUVERING MAMMAS.

With subtle scheming
Our brains are teeming;
No idle dreaming
Our bosoms know.
Observers wily
We notice slyly,
And value highly
The moneyed beau.

They blame us greatly,
And say sedately
The matron stately
Should caste revere ;
But we, hard-fated,
Are actuated
To have well-mated
Our daughters dear.

Far less than falter,
We may not alter
Nor yet would palter
With precepts dread.
If girls must marry
Tom, Dick, or Harry,
Why need they tarry
Till youth has fled ?

'Tis clearly better
To clinch the fetter
By word or letter,
By speech or pen ;

And so, most wary,
We mark how vary
For Maud or Mary
The moods of men.

With magic potion
The shy emotion
Of their devotion
We cannot sway ;
By means more slender
We strive to render
The trifler tender
A *fiancé*.

The art Circean
Is now plebeian,
The spell Medean
Has lost its vogue ;
But smiling sweetly
And planning neatly,
We trap completely
The careful rogue.

Before he guesses
That fond addresses
And light caresses
May vows evoke,
Without a blunder,
As lawful plunder,
We push him under
The marriage-yoke.

Our tricks to mention
Of tact, invention,
We've no intention
Nor any wish ;
But quite demurely
And most securely
(Believe it surely)
We land our fish !

JANE.

How bitter sounds their frigid worldliness !
Steel struck on ice gives not a harsher note.

I loathe it all, yet she, my mother, trusts
Entirely in my fealty to herself.
Hypocrisy unspeakable is mine;
I act a part, and am not what I seem.
These six bouquets, sent by myself, are borne
As mask and sham, concealing my true will.
For I desire no vain supremacy
In ranks of fashion, but my soul has bowed
In reverent homage to Leander Briggs.
Obscure is my Leander; we have met
But thrice; he is a simple dry-goods clerk,
Yet his pure, lofty soul towers high above
The gross necessities of dry-goods; he
Is nobly eminent, a man of men.
Would he were here to-night! . . . I dream his
eyes
Now gaze upon me in regretful scorn.

LEANDER BRIGGS.

Jane, loveliest of all womankind! I dare
To greet thee; I am insolently here!

JANE.

Here ! Thou, Leander ? Thou art here to-night ?

LEANDER.

I am.

JANE.

By invitation ?

LEANDER.

Nay, without.

JANE.

What means this unsurpassed audacity ?

LEANDER.

Nay, hearken ere thou blame. Since that sweet
hour

When thou didst purchase two yards of pink silk
Of Meares and Company, a fierce wild flame
Seems burning this poor heart of mine to ash.
No more for me my boarding-house allures

When the long dining-table buzzes high
With social chat and gossip thrives elate.
No more to me the obdurate beefsteak
Nor yet the sinewy chop seem tender viands,
For healthful appetite has fled my life,
And ills that were not ills now monstrous loom.
Never again the unpalatable bread,
The inferior butter, the imporous tart,
The gravy turned conglomerate, nor the soup
O'erfilmed with lucid grease, can satisfy.
Always henceforth I yearn toward better things.
The huge emporium, with its clamors coarse,
Its mercantile vulgarity, its yells
Of "cash," its haggling customers, its air
Of sordid discipline, repels and shocks.
The "Rosebud Sociable," where once a week
I danced with jovial friends of either sex
In unaristocratic jollity,
Has lost all charm; the gay Church Festival,
With tableaux and innocuous claret-punch,
Fails likewise to allure. Thy face, thine eyes,

Thy presence, haunt me with distracting force.
And therefore I am here. O pity me!

JANE.

That morn, when I made purchase of pink silk
Of Meares and Company, I will avow,
Was bright with new and strange experience.

LEANDER.

Again didst thou appear. Again pink silk
I measured for thee with unsteady hand.

JANE.

True. And once more we met ! 'Twas Friday last.

LEANDER.

Thou dost recall the day ? O happiness !
O day most memorable ! O Broadway car,
Wherein we met ! O fateful interview !

JANE.

I learned thy name, and answered with mine own.

LEANDER.

We left the car. We strolled in quiet streets,
Enthralled by dreamy converse, each with each.

JANE.

'Twas terribly imprudent. I repent
Mine act. I told thee all. No detail did I spare.
I told thee of my proud and cold mamma;
I told thee of my democratic sire;
I told thee of the future Bunting Ball.

LEANDER.

Thou didst. And eagerly I listened, too;
And passionately I responded, soon;
And ere we parted I had made resolve
To win thee as my bride, and sworn my love.

JANE.

We cannot wed. Thine act is desperate
In coming hither. If mamma should dream
What man thou really art, her wrath would fall
Alike on me and thee with fearful weight.

She wills that I shall wed some haughtier name,
Some man with old Dutch blood, though lean of
purse.

Yea, she would stare on thee with ireful eyes,
To know thee as a guest unbidden of her,
And straightway she would give austere commands
For thine ejection: wherefore, tarry not,
But go at once, nor even delay to taste
The succulent oyster and the bronze-brown quail.

LEANDER.

Quail me no quails, O thou supremely loved !
Nay, oyster me no oysters, cruel heart !
I have braved for thee expulsion's biting shame,
And bitter indeed this welcome that I get.
Is love so weak in thy chill maiden breast
That fear can slay it thus, nor lightly let
One meagre smile pass faintlier o'er thy lips
Than silvery gleams of sky in bleak sere lands ?
Hast thou no boon, no little tender boon,
That I departing may depart withal ?

No timorous palpitation of moistened lid,
No transitory touch of palm to palm,
No last brief look of love immeasurable,
Blossoming between thine eyelids and thine eyes?

JANE.

Whence hast thou caught such warm-hued trick of
speech?

Thine eloquence is like the bloomful chintz
That florid, sanguine, gorgeous, hangs for sale
Above thy counter at the Meares bazaar.

LEANDER.

Let me go hence. I think I shall not live
A great while, now. When thou shalt hear the
news

That I am dead at Number Twenty-Blank
West Thirty-Seventh Street, front room, third floor,
I pray of you to bear it well in mind
That I particularly do request
No flowers be sent. Such act were mockery.

JANE.

Nay, not if black death veil thine eyes in truth.

LEANDER.

Flowers are for those who leave sweet memories.

JANE.

Thy memory would bide sweet if I still lived.

LEANDER.

Live shalt thou, for no grief would make thee die.

JANE.

Great grief would melt my heart. Of this thou art
sure.

LEANDER.

Sure am I not. Thou speakest weightless words.

JANE.

As an ice-cream on a warm plate am I.

LEANDER.

Thou meanest that thy spirit bids me stay?

JANE.

I neither bid thee stay nor bid thee go.

LEANDER.

Wrapped is thy meaning in obscure retorts.

JANE.

Have care ; mamma approaches ; thou art seen.

LEANDER.

Seen am I. Yet being seen I shall not heed.

JANE.

Not heeding thou shalt do most grievous things.

LEANDER.

So shall I then not heed, imploring thee
To fly with me this very night and seek
A clergyman, who straight will make us one.

JANE.

Mamma draws near. What folly hast thou said ?

LEANDER.

I have said no folly. Dost thou deem it such?

JANE.

Should I do this mad thing, I must get wraps.

LEANDER.

Sealskin and wool thou verily must get.

JANE.

Get them I would if courage failed me not.

Yet hark! What mean those voices loudly raised?

CHORUS OF SOCIAL STRUGGLERS.

In the dim beginning of years,

In the dumb blind yearning of earth,

There were Saurian shapes, it appears,

Of huge and exorbitant girth.

These invertebrates, awful to view,

Were by no means a matter for scoff,

While our planet, as yet rather new,

Geologically cooled off.

But still, as they wallowed in slime
And on mammoths inferior fared,
With man, the last product of time,
They are not to be classed or compared.
And yet it would wake no amaze
To discover that creatures like these
Were divided in various ways
By preadamite social degrees.
For if man is the product obscure
Of the ages before he began,
Very likely such monsters impure
Bore a certain resemblance to man.
And if this be the case, we might deem
That the sole similarity lay
In an antediluvian scheme
Of an organized *haute volée*.
For since the least animal life
This terrestrial globe brought to view,
The doctrine of rank has been rife,
And the code "I am better than you."

Twas in Egypt, four thousand years past,
Very much as to-day it is seen ;
No democracy yet has killed caste,
No rebellion, and no guillotine.
And therefore in choric accord
Confessing our effort and pain,
We think we can safely afford
To state how we struggle and strain.
We have pushed, we have elbowed with might ;
We have scrambled and striven with zeal ;
There is no sort of possible slight
We've allowed ourselves really to feel.
We have entered at doors where we knew
That our presence unwelcome would pass,
Yet have dauntlessly carried things through
By a solid assumption of brass.
We have witnessed from hostess or host
The crudest scorn they could show,
But have never permitted, at most,
An idea that we might be *de trop.*

We are snubbed, yet we never much mind ;
Affronts we accept, bold or sly ;
We are constantly seeking to find
A patron or patroness high.
You may frown ; we responsively cringe :
You may hate ; we will merely repine.
On our self-respect you may impinge,
But though sad we will ask you to dine.
If you wound us, perchance we may bleed,
Yet the blood is clandestinely shed ; ✓
We desire that our sons may succeed ;
We desire that our daughters may wed.
We desire that our husbands and wives
May be pushed along, high and still higher ;
We are all, through our feverish lives,
In perpetual state of desire.
We are certain the realms that we seek
An insipid frivolity rules,
And at least seven times every week
We remind ourselves that we are fools.

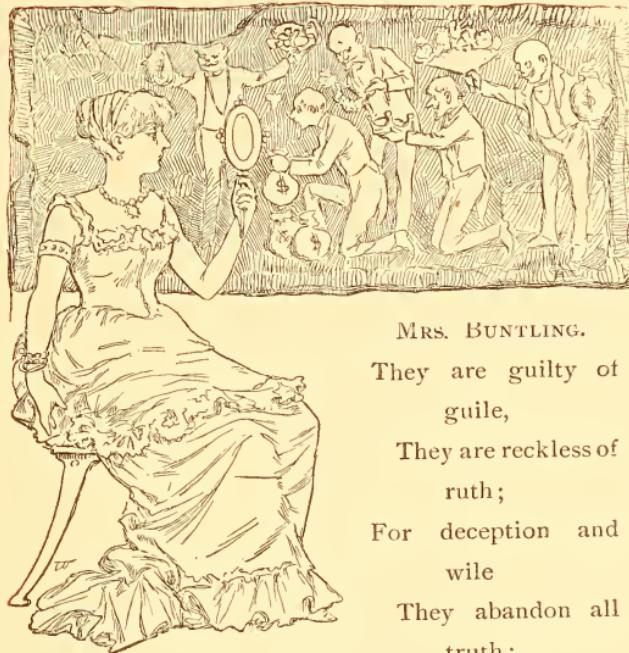
But in spite of such wholesome disdain,
With a fervor 'twere false to deny,
We incessantly struggle and strain,
We shall struggle and strain till we die.

MRS. BUNTLING.

As a bow that is bent,
Are determined their deeds ;
As a shaft that is sent,
So their energy speeds,
And the might of their snobbery riots as a tangled
and poisonous weed's.

SEMICHORUS OF SOCIAL STRUGGLERS.

As the famishing lip
When it yearns after food,
As the homeward-bound ship
When by tempest pursued,
So beyond Aristocracy's portals we daringly long
to intrude.



MRS. BUNTLING.

They are guilty of
guile,

They are reckless of
ruth;

For deception and
wile

They abandon all
truth;

They are clad with impervious cuticle, rhinoceroses
forsooth !

SEMICHORUS.

At the verge of a shrine,

At a goddess's feet,

Our brows we incline
And in worship compete,
As we bring to the idol our tributes, our offerings
many and sweet.

MRS. BUNTLING.

She is cold, she is calm,
This goddess ye name ;
From your suppliant palm
Great gifts will she claim ;
Ye must serve her with dinners and banquets, with
wines of pre-eminent fame.

SEMICHORUS.

The aromas that rise
From her altar must tell
Of those dainty supplies
The *bon vivant* loves well,
Out of kitchens Delmoniconian, where the poets of
cookery dwell.

MRS. BUNTLING.

To her priests ye shall bear
 Half the incomes ye hold,
To her priestesses fair
 Floral treasures untold,
Yea, the Jacqueminot red as your heart's-blood, the
 Marshal Niel hued like your gold.

SEMICHORUS.

These boons we have brought,
 And will bring them again,
Till the heed we have sought
 We shall proudly attain,
As reward for the canvas-back roasted, the libation
 of costly champagne.

MRS. BUNTLING.

If my loyalty swerves,
 Make it stanch, I adjure . . .
To the rich man who serves
 Will his guerdon be sure.

Though he sternly has trampled on pity, though
his heart no humanity lure?

SEMICHORUS.

Such a man for his prize,
As we haste to declare,
In the goddess's eyes
Holy merit shall wear . . .
Though a millionaire cry "Damn the people," 'tis
condoned if he be millionaire.

MRS. BUNTLING.

After heart-break and sigh
From December till May,
After much humble-pie
Swallowed every day,
Does it pay to have striven and conquered? O ye
that yet strive, does it pay?

SEMICHORUS.

We can give you aright
Neither praise nor dispraise

Of the goal whose delight
Still recedes from our gaze ;
Yet with confident spirit, O lady, we respond that
we do think it pays.

MRS. BUNTLING.

When all has been done,
When no more is to do,
What has truly been won ?
What shall truly accrue ?
O respond, is it worth having aimed at, or all cock-
adoodledoo ?

SEMICHORUS.

From reports we have heard
We can answer you thus :
It has all been averred
A preposterous fuss,
Where the mountain is constantly groaning, to bear
the *ridiculus mus*.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Then why do ye yearn
Without pause or surcease,
Like to captives that burn
For benignant release?

Or is it a mere monomania, a bedlamish kind of
caprice?

SEMICHORUS.

O lady, our craze
Is absurd, we admit,
By a singular phase
Of dementia hit;
But to state the mere fact of our lunacy, alas, will
not help it a bit.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Are not they the most blest
Whose affections incline
To the home as a nest
Where all comforts entwine?

To the kiss matrimonial at six, and the slippers
made ready at nine?

SEMICHORUS.

Nay, the goddess ordains,
Lest ye shrink from her strife,
That each votary gains
Her abhorrence through life,
If the wife pay regard to her husband, or the hus-
band show love for his wife.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Must a husband be cold?
Must a wife seem untrue?
What ye calmly unfold
As the course to pursue,
Is excessively wrong and improper, regarded from
my point of view.

SEMICHORUS.

Forbear thus to rail;
Forbear thus to storm.

The female and male,
Though their wedlock be warm,
Must meet as acquaintances merely, since more is
considered bad form.

MRS. BUNTLING.

But may not such plan
Bring calamitous hurt ?
May a full-wedded man
With a wedded wife flirt ?
Does New York aristocracy boldly all moral exam-
ples desert ?

SEMICHORUS.

Propriety awes,
Beyond question or doubt,
And her obdurate laws
It is folly to flout ;
Yet recall the Eleventh Commandment, which runs,
“Thou shalt not be found out.”

MRS. BUNTLING.

I am shocked, I am dazed
By the words you employ;
All my soul is amazed
That you jestingly toy
With principles cherished from childhood, as talis-
man, safeguard and joy.

SEMICHORUS.

They that foothold would seek
Past the great social dam,
Must consent to be meek
As an innocent lamb;
They must bow their heads tamely, devoutly, in
humble submission to sham.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Is there nothing sincere
In the creeds you adore?
Are the aims you revere
Utter fraud and no more?

If you care to be natural, honest, are you voted at once as a bore?

SEMICHORUS.

In the big masquerade
Of pretension and pelf,
You are sure to be laid
Very soon on the shelf,
If you have the audacious candor to appear representing Yourself.

MRS. BUNTLING.

So be it, if so inflexibly it is.
Who shall put bridle in the teeth of Fate?
Who shall control Society's dread laws?
Nay, ye that struggle with such ardent stress,
I am touched by pity of your eager needs.
And yet take courage; banish dark despair;
Are ye not here at this the Buntling Ball?
'Tis true the assemblage is not quite select,
Being large beyond the common festal scope.

Still, I have found ye on trustworthy lists,
Obtained from Jones, the managerial one,
Who served as clerk of the dead sexton, Brown.
Poor Brown (peace rest him !) knew with search-
ing ken
The grades of difference in all families
Whose carriages for half a century
He had called at weddings, funerals, and balls.
Now Jones succeeds him, honest, capable,
No man of bluster and obesity,
As thus I am told his predecessor, Brown,
Completely was ; but he has given me all
The names considered of decisive note ;
And therefore ye were hospitably asked
By me, not knowing if ye were high or low,
To swell this gorgeous throng ; but subtle time,
Whose face is old yet whose deceits are young,
May land ye safe on heights of proud success,
If patiently ye push as heretofore.
Push with good hope and fear not ; ye shall win
The calm delectable summit ere ye guess.

And as for sham, if sham be god, bow low
In reverential homage unto sham.
Frank speech is well and lying tongues are ill,
If ordinary cares engross the thought.
But now extraordinary indeed is this,
The attempted altitude of fine prestige
Ye fain would climb, to dwell on its far slopes,
In unassailable serenity,
Deaf to the cries of them that fare below.
Once, as ye will recall, ye cried like them,
And no one heeded ; those to ye were deaf
As ye to these one day shall also prove.
Then shall your hour of conquest dawn and smile ;
Then shall ye tingle with untold content,
Remembering that through honest vassalage
To fraud, servility, hypocrisy,
Ye gained the haughty hold ye then shall claim.
Speed ye, poor strugglers, rich yet sadly poor,
In this your firm unflinching enterprise.
For I am with ye, I am one of ye,
Even I, who also would attain your goal

And reign among the socially elect.
Bitter yet brief should be the contest waged ;
Nor I nor mine shall falter ; Jane, my child,
Will aid me, heiress to colossal wealth.
For Jane is loyal, and most filial, too ;
Whom I would will to have her wed she straight
Will acquiesce in meekly wedding ; thus
New power will come from her alliance proud,
For proud it shall be past all dream of doubt.

SEMICHORUS.

Where is your Jane ?

Why has she fled from us ?

Jane, we maintain,

Hides her sweet head from us.

Does she dislike us ? has she a fear of us ?

People will sometimes, as soon as they hear of us,
Turn with a sort of an ominous dread from us.

Jane, we explain,

Thinking us vain,

Thinking us vapid and selfish and frivolous,

Jane, it is plain,
With her disdain
Doubtless would mortify, wither and shrivel us.

MRS. BUNTLING.

You err in dreaming that my daughter seeks
To avoid you. Every guest in her regard
Is equal. She has marked no difference
In social grades; that knowledge will result
Later, when suitors throng with rivalries
Of adulation and their various claims
As eligible bachelors beam out
Clear, like the larger stars in twilight heavens.
Experience also of your womankind
Will soon enlighten both herself and me
Regarding whom to flatter, whom to hold
At decorous distance, whom to snub outright.
But now her snobbery, like a lily's bud,
Sheathed in green ignorance, is immature,
Indefinite, undetermined. Credit me,
Her absence means but some strây accident,

Perchance a mutinous ambuscaded pin,
Perchance the abrupt keen twinge of tight-shod
foot.

SEMICHORUS.

Jane, as we learn,
Is not absent at all.
Her we discern
Just at hand, within call.
There from the alcove's obscurity
Glimmers her maidenly purity,
While, amid fancied security,
Held in agreeable thrall.
Who is the gentleman near to her?
Is he a personage dear to her?
Is he a gallant
Of fortune and talent,
Reviving some old souvenir to her?
Surely a delicate mystery
Shrouds their acquaintance's history.
Where did they meet the last time?

Was it in pain or in pastime ?

Why does he press with such eagerness

Her hand in its glove-encased meagreness ?

Why are her soft eyelids fluttering ?

Why do the pink blushes warm her so ?

What is he tenderly uttering ?

Is he insane

With a passion for Jane,

And does he at present inform her so ?

JANE.

Forbear, Leander. Look, we are observed.

Your eloquence is awful in its force ;

Never since earliest girlhood have I known

Such power of human speech. They took me, once,

To a great wood in some suburban place

Not far from famed Chicago. There I heard

A preacher at camp-meeting. He was black,

But oh, the fervor of his rhetoric

Dwells in my memory still . . . He spoke like you,

Though less grammatically, I admit.

LEANDER.

And you will fly ? Oh, love irresolute,
Why hang my soul on indecision's thread,
That perilous film-like bridge o'er dark despair,
Slung between Yes and No at either side ?

JANE.

Now half consenting,
Anon refusing,
Yet always thrilling,
In doubt I stay.

LEANDER.

At last relenting,
My counsel choosing,
O maid unwilling,
Decide, I pray !

JANE.

The days romantic
Have passed forever ;

Eloping mortals
Are not the mode.

LEANDER.

When love is frantic
It enters ever
The church's portals
By any road.

JANE.

I like a marriage
With music pealing,
With flowers bridal,
With veil and cake.

LEANDER.

You so disparage
My ardent feeling
That suicidal
Intentions wake.

JANE.

I like a wedding
With bridemaids merry,
With gay collection
Of guests urbane.

LEANDER.

Your words are shedding,
O Jane, a very
Severe dejection
O'er heart and brain.

JANE.

I hate to marry
(Forgive my candor)
With no surrounding
Of nice expense.

LEANDER.

Your statements carry
To your Leander

Alarm astounding
And pain intense.

JANE.

Girls will be girls, Leander. We are made
In different wise from ye, and cannot help
Desire for nuptial pomp when we are wed.
No day in all a girl's life equals one—
Her wedding-day. And yet, I will be brave.
If strategy can aid me to steal forth,
Following your supplications, I will go.

LEANDER.

Dear acquiescent Jane! And yet I trace
Reluctant resignation in your phrase.

JANE.

Farewell the great church-organ's mellow boom ;
Farewell the long train shimmering up the aisle ;
Farewell the point-lace drapery richly hung
Down o'er the neck bediamonded bright ;
Farewell the attendant maidens, the bouquets,

The subsequent reception—farewell all !
Well do I fare, perchance, in thy true love,
Since brides that have no love like thine fare ill.
Yet sweet it were to wed thee not by stealth,
But openly, engirt with joyful guests,
And feel, departing in my travelling-robe,
A storm of slippers pelt the carriage-roof.

LEANDER.

Still thou wilt go, heeding thy promise given.

JANE.

Yes, I will go, if subtlest guile can serve.

LEANDER.

Your mother sets her glance upon my face.

JANE.

Retire, nor fail in speed, though let thy mien
Betray no fugitive intent or aim.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Daughter, what gentleman was he who ceased
A moment since from converse with thyself ?

JANE.

Nay, how should I know rightly, dear mamma?
He named his name, yet memory loses it.

MRS. BUNTLING.

His air and costume lacked patrician grace.

JANE.

I thought not thus. He seemed the same as they
Who smile bland smiles on every side of us,
Though possibly the parting of his hair
Had less of mathematic symmetry;
Perchance his boots were of less dazzling gloss.

MRS. BUNTLING.

I thought he wore white satin at his throat,
Above a shirt with rich embroidery
Densely encrusted. If this thing be true,
I doubt his right to rank among my guests,
And fancy him a shrewd impostor, come
Hither audaciously without a card.

JANE.

Such fancy were injustice, oh, be sure.

MRS. BUNTLING.

He did not bear the same sleek dapper mien
As yonder gentleman, whose name I know,
Florimel Filigree, a personage
Who is assumably professional,
Like our musicians and our caterers.
For I have learned that he is wont to lead
The German at festivities like these.

JANE.

Yet therefore not professional, perhaps.
Beware, mamma, lest thou shouldst rashly err.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Nay, wherefore should the leader of one's band
Be paid, the leader of one's German not?
Daughter, thy knowledge of society
Here in New York is vaguer than my own,

Though mine, I will accede, is yet obscure.
Forbear to urge false views, and credit mine,
Since none of stouter verity hast thou.

JANE.

(Would I could slip with steps unnoted hence,
Gain my own chamber, covertly change dress,
And after join Leander where he waits.
The chance arrives . . . Mamma becomes absorbed
In amiable talk with him she named
Florimel Filigree . . . I disappear.)

MRS. BUNTLING.

Sir, if I recollect aright, you are
The person recommended to conduct
My German, at the hour of one o'clock.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

The person recommended! Madam, I
A person recommended to conduct
Your German! Do my ears play tricks with me?

CHORUS OF BELLES.

Come with bright boots and with loveliest of collars,
Leader most perfect, dancer divine,
With the sense of an income of many dollars,
With a hand white as milk, with an instep fine ;
Bind on thy best pumps, O thou most fleet,
Over thy Terpsichorean feet,
For the sayings of sages, the seekings of scholars,
Are futile against fascinations like thine.

How may we charm thee, how may we chat to thee,
Bow at thy bidding and fealty swear ?
Be more beloved than thy cane or thy hat to thee,
Proudlier prized than thy best *boutonnière* ?
For the waltzings of others are unto thine
As the worms that glint to the stars that shine ;
And expressing this tender trifle or that to thee
Is worth all the wisdom the ages wear.

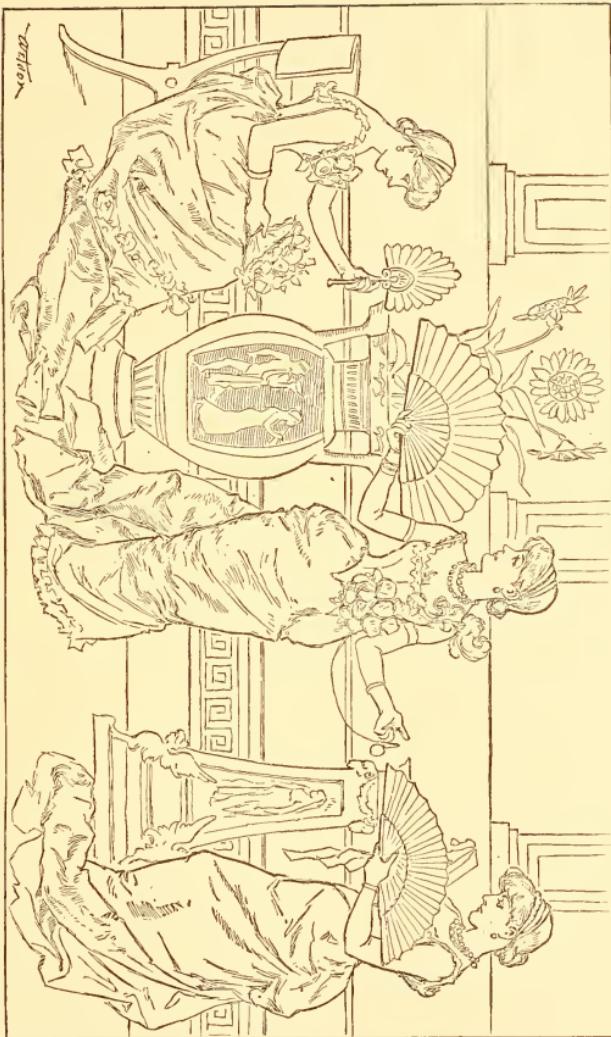
For winter's winnings are not yet over,
Nor all that the season of snow secures ;

The dinners attracting lover to lover,
The balls alive with flirtation's lures ;
And your speeches more soft than flocculent cotton,
Whenever delivered are unforgotten,
And notwithstanding the guile they cover,
Sentence by sentence their spell endures.

The glad belle feeds, while her smooth cheek
flushes,
On language hinting thine ardent suit ;
The pure faint flame of her being flushes
From foot to brow and from brow to foot ;
And brow and foot are as one sweet fire,
And her heart is filled with a fond desire,
While girt of thine arm she gayly rushes
Over ball-room floors to bassoon and flute.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Maidens, what do ye singing? Wherefore sing
Thus jocundly in praise of my poor self?



CHORUS OF BELLES.

Raiment of praise we bring to thee,
Worthy to mantle and cling to thee,
 Songs we uplift
 As thy merited gift.
And rejoice while we loyally sing to thee.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Nay, maidens, though blind fate has wrought me
 thus,
With hyacinthine locks on stainless brow;
Though tailoring adroit has helped my shape
To show its utmost manly majesties,
Why therefore should ye rather seek my note
Than that of others, wealthier if less fair?

CHORUS OF BELLES.

We cannot assert we would deign for thee
Such choice as we now entertain for thee,
 If thine income were less
 Than we venture to guess
Its absolute annual gain for thee.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Ye like me then for nothing save my store
Of miserable lucre ! Woe is me !

CHORUS OF BELLES.

Not for this do we like thee exclusively,
Though pelf we regard not illusively ;
Our opinion exalts
Thy superb way to waltz,
While we grant that we laud it effusively.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Maidens, I thank ye. Sweet your tones of cheer
After gross insult given a moment since.

CHORUS OF BELLES.

Not a maiden who hears thee but will agree—
Yea, if scorned in the past, but will still agree—
That as leader supreme
Of the German's quaint scheme
She acknowledges Florimel Filigree.

Among fops full of impudent vanity
Thou shonest for sense and urbanity,
And if any one states
That our praise overrates,
We denounce his dissent as insanity.

Oh, the manners of fashion are quackery,
And its morals mere frail bric-à-brac-erie ;
And the modern young beau,
As the best of us know,
Should be scorched by a Dickens or Thackeray.

But in thee we find no superfluity
Of empty conceit and fatuity ;
In thee doth abide
Solid merit outside
Of thy large and attractive annuity.

Yea, thou art deserving of benison
As the ball-room's most elegant denizen ;

In honor we hold
Thy moustache of spun gold,
Which would shame not a stanza by Tennyson.

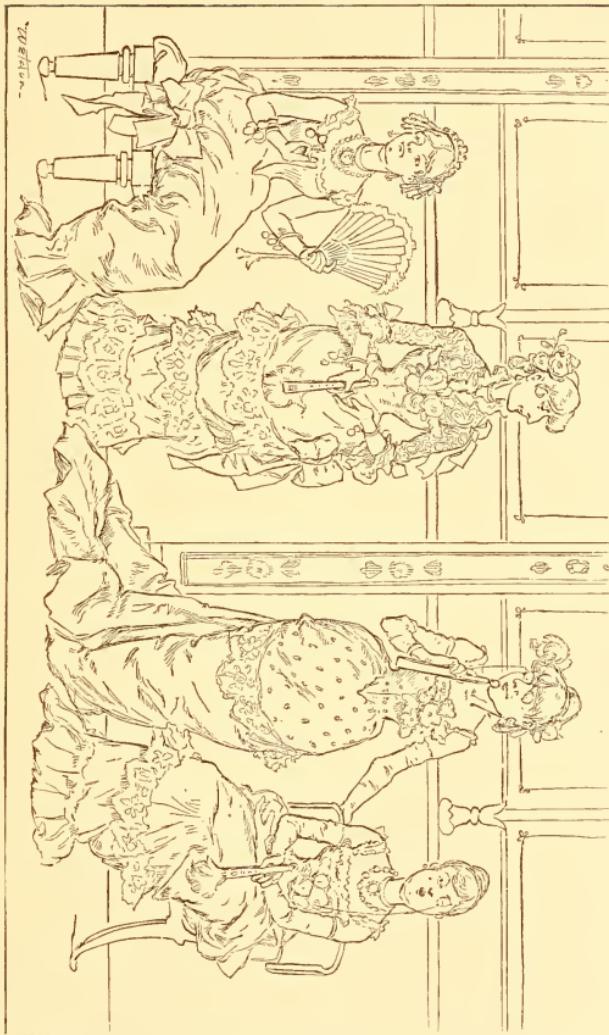
No prince of the blood in days far-agone,
No Duke of Lorraine or of Aragon,
Could boast, we declare,
A more exquisite air
Than our darling, our pet, and our paragon.

More supple than willow or hickory
When trained by the bow-bearer's trickery,
Thy feet can explore
The expanse of the floor
In a style that would startle Terpsichore.

Each maiden is fondly insatiate
Herself in thy heart to ingratiate,
And all of our clique
Could continue a week
On thy personal charms to expatiate.

CHORUS OF WALL-FLOWERS.

Cease, O girls, your daring song,
Full of adulation mad
For the nimble-footed lad
Whom your fulsome praises wrong.
Gazing on your dainty throng,
Well we mark you sneer and pout;
Well we know ye scorn and flout
Them that now severely chide.
Much, ye deem, our eyes would see
In the form of Filigree,
If 'twere not our doom to mope
Far from his approving glance,
Everlastingly denied
Any little spark of hope
That his feet will pause beside
Us whom no one asks to dance.
Rightly have ye judged perchance;
Yet the lonely wall-flowers brood,
In their sad neglected state
Of perpetual solitude;



Oft they muse and cogitate
On the conduct bold and rude
Of the belles more fortunate.
Oft they make their murmur low
At your sentiments imbued
With such artificial glow.
Ah, we lonely wall-flowers guess
All your schemes, astute and shrewd,
All the deep, deceptive wiles,
All the Machiavellian smiles
That accomplish your success,
Leaning limp against the wall,
With no gardener at all
To relieve our irksome lot.
Fain our tendrils would incline
With dependence feminine
Toward some stout supporting bough;
Yet we may secure it not,
And the yearning must control
Of each disappointed soul.
Never may the wall-flower tell.

Though she ponder many hours,
Just by what peculiar spell
She is unlike other flowers;
Never may she learn the whence
Of such doleful difference.
Though she strive with all her powers,
Never may she be a belle!
This alone she understands,
While the seasons run their sands,
And the dread more darkly lowers
Of a spinster's hated name.
Surely 'tis not odious looks,
Mottled skin or arms that flame,
Clumsy waist or shapeless hands,
Eyes that squint or nose that crooks,
Nor a neck whose outline owns
To the unsymmetric shame
Of conspicuous collar-bones.
Why we ever fail to please,
Why we pine in lone distress,
Why we languish partnerless,

Is from no defects like these.
Yet we grant we cannot seize
Those resources of finesse
Which our bolder sisters use;
We admit we cannot flirt,
Ogle, simper, and employ
Half a hundred modes alert
To bewilder and amuse,
To entangle and decoy.
Then, moreover, we enjoy
No excess of worldly gain:
Were we heiresses, indeed,
All anxiety and pain
Would depart from us with speed.
For the heiress may be plain
As late autumn's rusty weed,
May be florid, freckled, spare,
Awkward, bouncing, shambling, staid,
Huge of bulk and harsh of voice,
Yet the instances are rare
Of her dying an old maid,

Save she does so out of choice.
Haunting balls where she is thought
An encumbrance at the best,
Thither mercilessly brought
By mammas who never rest
From their lectures when at home,
Haply in the wall-flower's breast
Loftier longings find a place,
That she judges light as foam
All which idly happens here,
And has no desire to face
An assemblage of such mere
Meretricious atmosphere.
It may be that in her brain
Great ideas have taken root,
From the circles which contain
Modern thinkers of repute ;
It may be that she would fain
Calmly, diligently list
Unto themes which more invite
Than to canter, night by night,

Through the German's twirl and twist,
With a spry fop at her wrist;
It may be that she is quite
Wed to Matthew Arnold's views,
Loving Sweetness, loving Light;
It may happen that the gist
Of her close research pursues
Herbert Spencer's creed of doubt,
While she serves as his devout
Fellow-evolutionist.
Or perchance, with aim more mild,
On æsthetic fancies bent,
She an earnest ear has lent
To the words of Oscar Wilde,
And would paint the undefiled
Lily on a velvet ground,
Or the sunflower represent
In rich needlecraft profound.
Or she may have spared no stern
Industry to probe and scan
All the doctrines which concern

Woman as the peer of Man.
Yet, whatever plea or plan
That the wall-flower may confess
With effusive eagerness
For employments far aloof
From the shallow pomp she meets,
Redolent of stale deceits,
Always coldly, ne'ertheless,
Every intellectual proof
Thus exhibited receives
Her mamma's complete rebuff.
O the hapless wall-flower grieves
At parental treatment rough,
Told more times than she can count
(As if once were not enough),
That she lets her chance slip by,
That she seems a wretched guy,
That the generous amount
Spent upon her brave attire
Should excite her to apply
Stout ambition's force and fire,

And be wedded ere she fades,
Ere she ranks with ancient maids.
Thus mammas will bid aspire,
Thus they rouse the wall-flower's ire,
Thus they goad and taunt till she
Desperately yearns to be
Mated, howsoe'er amiss,
With some vapid spouse like this
Flippant Florimel Filigree.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

I hear ye, plaintive girls, yet heed ye not.
A keener pain has dealt me deeper wounds
Than all your querulous clamors may bestow.
For, look ye, of stainless name, unflawed repute,
I have been held until this fatal hour.
In sovereign isolation did I reign
Over all envious competitors.
My necktie was an edict, and my coat
A proclamation ; my new-purchased cane
Struck jealousy to countless burning hearts.

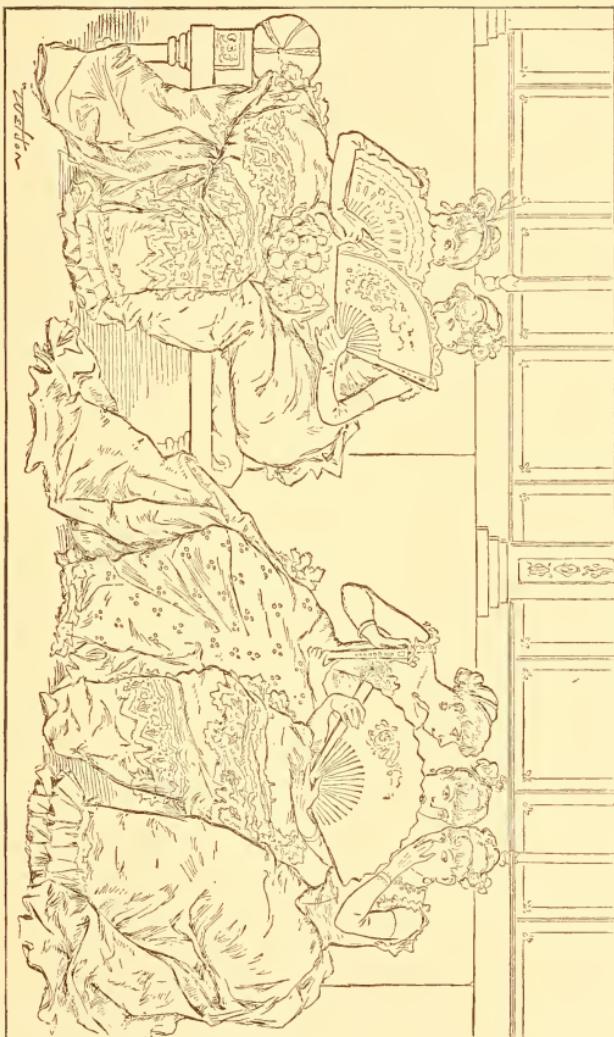
My smile was canonizing in its gleam,
And made a sacred belle of her it cheered.
Ye wall-flowers could not reach its precious light,
But dwelt in shadow of its chill recoil,
Wherefore ye scowled and grumbled in your
spleen.

I was till now the blameless arbiter
Of fashion, style, decorum and prestige.
But lo, I am insulted, put to shame,
Miscalled in terribly calumnious way
A person recommended to conduct
The German at this vulgar Buntling Ball.
Ah, woe is me that am ignobly classed
With caterers, musicians, florists, men
Who toil for pay with gross plebeian souls.
Why did I fling the splendor of my fame
Thus broadcast on barbaric boorishness?
I should have held myself at rarer worth;
I should have recollected I was I.
Now never any more in future time
It shall be as it was with Filigree.

Already do I hear the cruel tale
Bandied from lip to lip of how I met
Impertinence abominable, thrust
At my respectability supreme.

CHORUS OF GOSSIPS.

Yea, Filigree, thou shalt in sooth receive
 No mercy at our hands.
Thou knowest, and none knows better, we believe,
The mission that we bear, the tasks we achieve,
 In all societies throughout all lands.
But oft we fancy that our tongues wear fork
 Deadlier and keener when we make New York
 Our lair and dwelling-place.
And yet we peradventure do mistake,
Thus localizing the chief woes we wake,
Since in all cities, Paris, London, Rome,
Wherever man is faulty, foolish, base,
We are and shall be equally at home.



The old classic Furies were but three,
And yet far otherwise it is with us,
Whose number is truly multitudinous,
Although we flagellate in like degree.
Think not to escape us; vigilant are we,
And armed at every point with cunning tact.
Minute indeed the unimportant fact
That can evade our piercing search;
Trivial indeed the least diurnal act
That leaves our curiosity in the lurch.

We know with what unflagging force
Those tireless Greenbacques ever push and squeeze
In their inflexibly propulsive course,
And almost supplicate upon their knees
For cards to dinners, parties, ante-prandial teas.

We have seen Sibylla Moneypenny bow
With cold impertinence to Ida Gray,
Whom once she fawned upon because *au fait*
In fashionable matters, but whom now
She finds of no more use in her ascent
Up aristocracy's aërial stairs.

We have heard how young Kate Pertinax has spent
Whole hours in mending frocks and cleaning
gloves,

Since every rag the poor dear pauper wears
Her own hand of necessity repairs,
Turns, twists, remodels, that she still may keep
Some sort of foothold in the loud gay world she
loves.

We observe, with stealthy eyes that never sleep,
All secrets of the household, all affairs
Domestically holy and obscure.

Mysterious means are ours, whence we procure
Tidings of separation and divorce,
Delicious bits of scandal immature,
Some merely racy, some profanely coarse.

We know the servants' wages paid (or not)
By many a family of good renown;
We mark the corner-grocer's threatening frown,
The unrewarded butcher's piteous lot,
The explosive milliner's resentment hot
While dunning for some long-completed gown.

We note the irate florist's wrath, or still
The enraged confectioner's, or worse,
That frequent and denunciating curse
Of the wronged tailor, with his unreceipted bill !

MRS. BUNTLING.

Dire are these free disclosures, and condemn
The lips that give their spite impressive shape . . .
Since I, sweet Florimel Filigree, have erred,
I crave with lowly grief your clement heed.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

I grant you grace, though deep the hurt you dealt.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Nay, 'tis not deep enough to thwart quick cure.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

My pride is delicately sensitive.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Too long on adoration thou hast fed.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Ambrosial diet, palatably rare.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Whereon dyspepsia waits, like Nemesis.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Dyspeptic am I not, nor ever was.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Pride is an indigestion of the soul.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Thou canst not understand me superfine.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Mortal thou art at most, howe'er thou vaunt.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

All yield to death, the exotic as the weed.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Rankest thou none on earth thy better born ?

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

How should I, lady, since none such draws breath?

MRS. BUNTLING.

O apotheosis of wild conceit!

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

'Tis not conceit to know one's vast deserts.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Great thinkers, writers, poets walk our globe.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

These are but toiling servants whom we pay.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Dost thou not reverence intellect at all?

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

I reverence nothing save the claims of caste.

MRS. BUNTLING.

O monstrous arrogance! what man is this?

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Thou too reverest eminence like mine.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Wherefore assert, since thou art weak to prove?

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Plenteous my proof, else why the Buntling Ball?

MRS. BUNTLING.

I seek proud place, yet prize not solely this.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

You seek a visiting-list of flawless kind.

MRS. BUNTLING.

With strong desire, but not with burning hope.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Such hope were worthy! hold it not in scorn.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Pet of the ladies, hast thou any woes?

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

I find it difficult to dress a blond.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Thou art American, or so I dream.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

I shame to answer in affirmative.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Dost thou regret thy country and thy race?

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

With all my well-bred gentlemanly soul.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Hast thou forgot the name of Washington?

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Nay, surely not! he was an Englishman.

MRS. BUNTLING.

What word hast thou to say for Lexington?

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

A silly brawl, insulting good King George.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Dost thou not heed thy country's politics?

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

I vote not on election-days, but bet.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Ah, why this unexampled apathy?

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

I hate all principles republican.

MRS. BUNTLING.

What others dost thou hunger for instead?

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

The White House turned a palace, me a Peer.

MRS. BUNTLING.

O traitorous and mad apostasy!

CHORUS OF BELLES.

Vex not our dear one's mind
With thy shallow wit;
Vex it not, O Unrefined,
For thou canst not fathom it.
Rather shouldst thou sing a measure
Full of adulating pleasure
To a creature of his dainty darling kind.

MRS. BUNTLING.

What pæan do ye lift to what loved god?

CHORUS OF BELLES.

Thou mayst have met him now and then,
Albeit we candidly declare
He seldom walks excepting when
The weather is extremely fair.
Most walking he esteems a bore;
From 'bus or car his tastes rebel;
And cabs he finds appropriate for
The modern New York swell.

Yet, meeting him, 'tis ten to one
Thou quietly hast taken note
How nice an architect has done
The building of his overcoat.
Thine eye has marked the shape and shade
Of peerless trousers, perfect hat—
The intellectual effort made
In tying his cravat.

And doubtless thou hast paused and said,
"Behold a being not designed
The favor of one glance to shed
On vulgar members of his kind.
For finer clay wise Nature sought
(It needs but half a glance to tell)
When in propitious mood she wrought
This modern New York swell."

His breakfast is before him set
At ten, eleven, sometimes two,
And then he lights a cigarette
And skims the morning papers through.

On afternoons he oft will chance
A window at the club to try,
And stare quite out of countenance
The ladies who pass by.

Or on a club-lounge he will loll,
To wicked scandals giving heed,
Some most ridiculously droll,
Some very terrible indeed :
How slightly Brassnose minds a snub,
How Toperton has sprained his wrist,
How Slye will have to leave the club
For fraudulence at whist.

Or he will go to drive, perhaps,
On certain favorable days,
In one of his attractive traps
Behind a pair of beauteous bays.
Some noted belle displays her charms
Beside him, if his whim permits,
And at his back, with folded arms,
A rigid little "tiger" sits.

'Tis rare that he alone will dine,
Since dining out diverts him more,
And all our best grandees incline
To entertain him o'er and o'er.
His million and his manners please,
And then it looks extremely well
To seat at their mahoganies
A modern New York swell.

At evening party or at ball
He shines conspicuously bright,
And is not looked upon at all
In any low and menial light.
The hostesses of our *haut ton*
Are always ready to admit
That when he leads their *cotillon*
He lends new charm to it.

On opera he doth fondly dote,
Though of its music, we confess,
He seldom hears a single note
With any real attentiveness.

From box to box he loves to float,
And there he finds us all the same ;
Compared with him we promptly vote
Our favorite tenor tame.

And thus he passes hours away,
Yet sometimes toils, in spite of rank,
Since now and then, for half a day,
He cuts off *coupons* at the bank.
A dreadful trouble . . . yet full well
We know each life some care must see—
Yea, even the life of such a swell
As peerless Florimel Filigree.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Surely thou art beloved past common use . . .
Wilt lead my German as first foreordained?

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Nay, lady, though I freely pardon thee
Thy terrible unprecedented wrong,

I still am none the less debilitate,
Demoralized, unstrung and shattered quite.
I pray thee, therefore, ask some other man,
Since many another would be glad to fill
The office I resign for this one night.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Thou hast not yet beheld my daughter Jane
With any save mayhap a cursory glance.
Ere thou refusest, deign to mark my child,
Thy willing partner, milky-armed, star-eyed,
And robed in garments of the latest mode.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

I search for Jane, yet I discern her not.

CHORUS OF BELLES.

Jane, Jane,
Where hast thou fled?
Jane, it is plain,
Has hidden her head.

Florimel openly shows to her



Heed that by no means he owes to her;
And how can we say,
Ere the night wear away,
Whether Florimel may not propose to her?

MRS. BUNTLING.

Vainly I search through either spacious room,

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Lady, art sure she sits not bowered aloof
In gloom of some dim-tapestried recess,
Beside some Anglomaniac devotee?

MRS. BUNTLING.

Nay, Heaven avert that any maniac guest
Should thrust his perilous presence where I dwell.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Many have done this thing, yet fear thou not,
Since void of harm their mild insanity.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Spite of thy charge to fear not, still I fear.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

Keep silent, hearkening, and thy fear shall end.

CHORUS OF ANGLOMANIACS.

It is positively false to call us frantic,
For the soundness of our mental state is sure,
Yet we look upon this side of the Atlantic
As a tract of earth unpleasant to endure.

We consider dear old England as the fountain
Of all institutions reputably sane;
We abominate and loathe a Rocky Mountain;
We regard a rolling prairie with disdain.

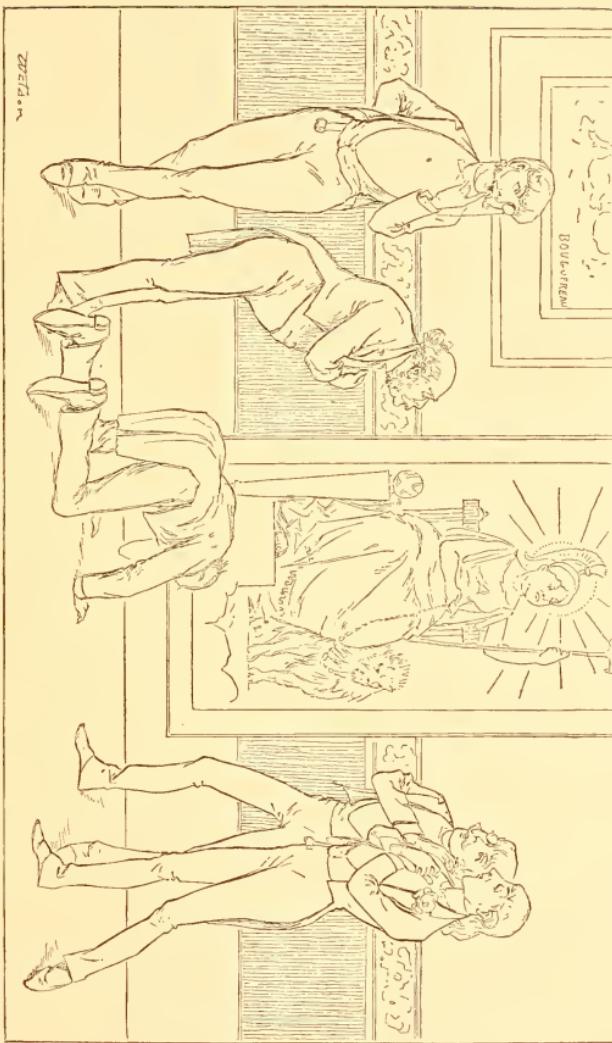
We assiduously imitate the polish
That we notice round the English nabob hang ;
We unfailingly endeavor to abolish
From our voices any trace of nasal twang.

Every patriotic duty we leave undone,
With aversion such as Hebrews hold for pork,
Since we venerate the very name of London
In proportion to our hatred of New York.

No entreaty could in any manner soften
Our contempt for native tailors, when we dress ;
If we bet, we "lay a guinea," rather often,
And we always say "I fancy" for "I guess."

We esteem the Revolution as illegal ;
If you mention Bunker Hill to us, we sigh ;
We particularly execrate an eagle,
And we languish on the fourth day of July.

We are not prepared in any foolish manner
The vulgarities of Uncle Sam to screen ;
We dislike to hear that dull "Star-Spangled
Banner,"
But we thoroughly respect "God Save the
Queen."



We revere the Prince of Wales, though he should
prick us
With a sneer at the republic we obey !
We would rather let His Royal Highness kick us
Than have been the bosom-friend of Henry Clay !

MRS. BUNTLING.

Rank treason riots in their daring song.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

They sing but what they feel. So bear with them.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Rather than bear with them would I rebuke.

FLORIMEL FILIGREE.

'Twere rash to tempt their Anglomaniac scorn.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Rash though it were, I yearn to speak my mind.

THE BUTLER.

Most gracious lady, supper is announced.

MRS. BUNTLING.

I miss not merely Jane, but also him,
My lord, Alonzo, master of this feast.

CHORUS OF BELLES.

Where is Alonzo,
Round as a barrel,
Hating to don so
Smart an apparel?
Supper is calling him,
Martyr yet master.
Is there disaster
Darkly befalling him?
He should be near us
In stout actuality,
Ready to cheer us
With fine hospitality.
Does he forsake us,

Far in some upper room,
When he should take us
All to the supper-room ?
Does he imagine us
Disinclined slightly
To welcome politely
His smile oleaginous ?
Has he detected
A vague incivility ?
Is he affected
By latent hostility ?
Why should he shirk us ?
Why thus depart from us ?
Feelings that irk us
Angrily start from us.
Since the festivity
Shows a proclivity
Both to be edible
And to be potable,
Nay, 'tis quite risible
Unto the most of us

That he, the host of us,
Should not be visible,
Should not be notable.
Tell us, Alonzo,
Where you abide from us.
Why carry on so,
Alonzo, and hide from us?

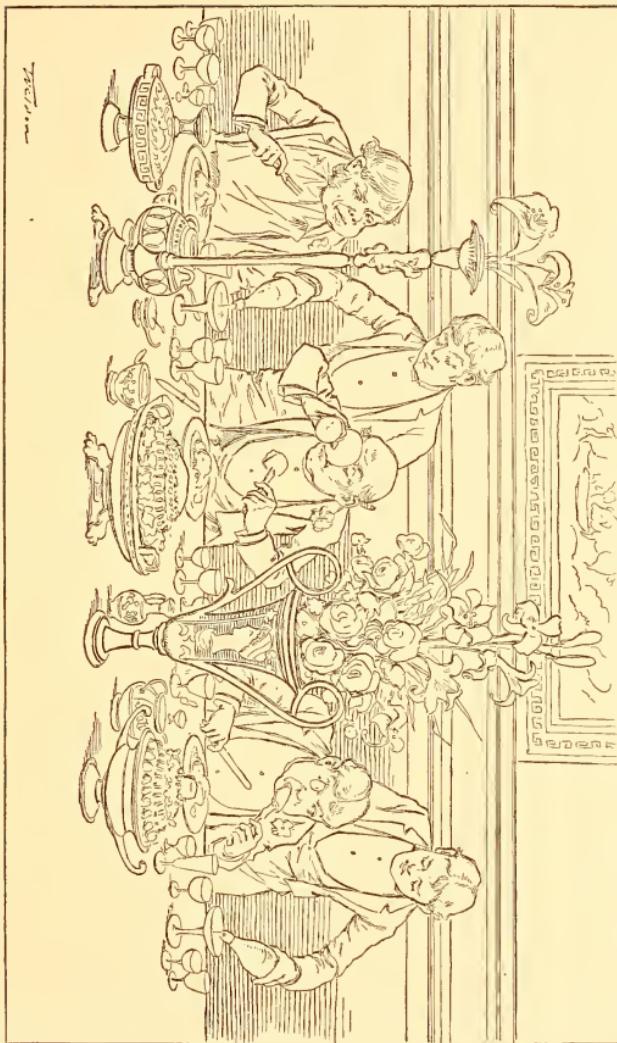
MRS. BUNTLING.

I had given orders, maidens, while ye sang
Your song half-freighted with sarcastic spleen,
Even as an arrow is half-tipped with gall . . .
The house in its entirety has been searched,
Yet sign or trace is found not of these twain,
My lord, the giver of this festival,
My white-armed daughter, treasured past all cost.
Ah, woe is me, upon whose modern head,
Whose nineteenth-century head, has fallen an ill
Most like calamities of ancient sort.
Now, if I knew to phrase the antique mode
Of suffering, I should peradventure tear

My hair and moan with anguish classical.
But knowing not these methods of great grief,
I, powerless to tell my misery,
Must uncomplainingly adopt the style
Of modern sufferers and control myself.
Wherefore I bid ye all, with placid mien,
To sup, and while ye sup I bid ye think
No thought of me deserted by her kind,
Yearning to know the whereabouts of Jane,
Yearning to know Alonzo's whereabouts.
For I am sick at heart with awful dread :
But ye, partake ; the savory supper waits ;
The slim-necked bottle nestles in the ice ;
The sweet-fumed feast entices, close at hand.
But me no appetite hath power to charm,
Deserted, and most unexpectedly,
By lord and offspring at the Bunting Ball.

CHORUS OF GLUTTONS.

We go with pleasure where you invite us, we scent
the joyance of dainties rare ;



The well-known odors once more excite us, with
force sufficient to curl our hair.

A single purpose at ball or party controls our com-
ing, prolongs our stay ;—

'Tis that of getting a nice and hearty substantial
supper, with naught to pay.

Our souls are with you, the gracious giver ; we fol-
low gladly where'er you lead ;

We own, each claimant, a perfect liver, and fine
equipment to largely feed.

Let others cherish the romping German, or see in
chatter a charm to lure ;

Our gastric juices alone determine whatever pas-
time we may secure.

No idle worship of empty Mammon, no silly babble
of man or maid,

Against attractions of flaky salmon or larded par-
tridge may be arrayed.

The eye that flashes, the lid that flutters, the fan
flirtatious, the murmured phrase—

How slight a magic their meaning utters beside a
lobster with mayonnaise !

What true contentment may pride insure us,
through airs pretentious and vain display,

When ranked with raptures that Epicurus, though
dead for decades, preserves to-day ?

Shall Kate who ogles, or blushing Mabel, or smiling Lucy, their foibles rate

With those enticements the supper-table, when fatly
furnished, can demonstrate ?

Do feet that twinkle, or glances dreamy, or lips that
prattle, at all compare

With Mumm and Clicquot a trifle creamy, or *filet mignon* a trifle rare ?

Nay, heed and trust us, the hue is duller on cheek
of maiden, though mantling gay,

Than that more balmy and bloomy color which
brims a bottle of Beaujolais.

The hopes of mortals may pass and perish ; their
faith may vanish ; their foes may smite ;

But they are happy who still can cherish the one
last blessing of appetite.

Though love desert us, though friends' affection to
deeds of malice may basely stoop,

How sweet to treasure the proud reflection that still
we value a perfect soup!

While cares beset him and troubles thicken, no man
is wretched who still can boast

Appreciation of devilled chicken and admiration for
quail on toast.

Though tyrants flourish and varlets flatter, though
kingdoms totter and slaves rise up,—

When all is ended, how slight a matter, if still we've
peptics to dine or sup!

Let statesmen squabble and nations wrangle, let
great reformers their schemes propound;

What use to bother with life's tough tangle while
nature leaves us a palate sound?

The gains of glory defeat their winner; ambition's
bubbles explode when caught:

There dwells more comfort in one good dinner than
all the wisdom that Plato taught!

MRS. BUNTLING.

Guests, if my lord, at this unseemly time,
Hath choice to absent himself from our repast,
Ye therefore judge the event with lenient mood,
And feast as though your host were here in flesh.
Nay, if you pardon frankness from the mouth
Of one for whom politest art of speech
Is now your debt as it should be my grace,
I fain would venture, with all courteous heed,
To rank no overplus of modesty
Among those many virtues which perchance
Adorn the social leaders of New York.
Chide me if with untoward haste I judge,
Gathering my quick decision from stray words
Your lips have dropped in tones of loud or low.
Wherefore, partake, and ere the banquet ends
I trust this most mysterious vanishment
Of him whose name I dutifully bear,

And her who duteously names him sire,
Will clear, and leave no shadow in its wake
Of nebulous bewilderment,—as when
The emergent sun orbs all his vivid gold
From clouds disparring, and the enormous blue
Of stainless heaven, swept clear by rapid gales,
Beams brilliant o'er the moist rain-glittering
earth . . .

But who approaches with unwonted mien,
And eyeballs unconventionally rolled?
What sharp alarm puts tremor in his lips?
What agitation quite galvanical
Crooks his erratic elbows, and destroys
The equilibrium of his dorsal thews?

THE BUTLER.

Lady, I was thy butler ; but dread fright
Me that am only man hath altered much.

MRS. BUNTLING.

If fright has altered thee to this blanched thing,

I pray fright palsy not thy trembling tongue
Till thou hast told what baleful news it hides.

THE BUTLER.

Lady, thy lord hath passed his vestibule
And entered his well-decorated hall,
Himself yet not himself, I shame to state.
For he is flown with wine, hath drunken deep,
And all his majesty of corpulence
Is changed as when I dip the dry crisp folds
Of a clean towel into heated suds:
Even so thy lord is limp and flaccid now.

MRS. BUNTLING.

O unforeseen calamity! Get hence,
And bid thy fellow-vassals aid thine hand
With timely interference, ere he seek
These crowded chambers, fronting cruel jeers.

THE BUTLER.

Lady, no more could I restrain him now

Than round the o'erflowing goblets that I serve
Repress the Verzenay too rashly poured.

SEMICHORUS OF GOSSIPS.

Matters look extremely queer . . .
Are we wrong or are we right?
Anastasia pales with fear,
As we feel that well she might.

SEMICHORUS.

Omens dark are in the air . . .
Wait and watch, with lively sense;
Soon we all shall be aware
Of a scandal quite' immense.

SEMICHORUS.

As 'tis pleasant to aver,
Fate especially has planned
That whatever may occur,
We shall have it at first hand.

SEMICHORUS.

Be it trivial, be it great,
We shall note the whole affair,
Able afterward to state,
Calmly, proudly—"I was there."

SEMICHORUS.

No one knows till he has tried,
What enjoyment may be seized
When the gossip feels with pride
Curiosity appeased.

SEMICHORUS.

We of course would all object
That disaster should befall
Any gathering select,
Like the present Bunting Ball.

SEMICHORUS.

Still, should something yet unnamed
Stimulate our anxious fears,

We could surely not be blamed
If we used our eyes and ears.

SEMICHORUS.

Look ! Alonzo comes this way,
And we plainly can assert
That a shocking disarray
Marks the bosom of his shirt.

SEMICHORUS.

Far from us the malice be
Hateful slanders to invent ;
But beyond a doubt we see
That Alonzo's coat is rent.

SEMICHORUS.

Calumny we all deplore ;
False reports we disavow ;
But the top-knot that he wore
Is a hirsute ruin now.

SEMICHORUS.

We despise mere reckless talk,
Loved by malapert and dunce,
But Alonzo seeks to walk
Two diverging ways at once.

SEMICHORUS.

'Tis not ours to interfere
With the utterance nature grants,
But his vowels all appear
Angry at their consonants.

SEMICHORUS.

Always with concern polite
We from vulgar speech have shrunk;
But Alonzo seems to-night
Irremediably drunk.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Alonzo, am I mad or do I dream?
You dawn like some unbidden ribald guest

Here on the nice decorum and fine state
Of this the Ball I give with proud intent
To assert my claims for social eminence.

MR. BUNTLING.

I took a walk, to get a lilleair.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Thy lips incapably articulate
The unwilling words that thou wouldst have them
speak.

MR. BUNTLING.

Look here, now, Anastasia, don' getmad.

MRS. BUNTLING.

O dark calamity ! O dread disgrace !

MR. BUNTLING.

I met a few friends at the Hoffmanouse.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Forbear, I pray, to wildly seize my robe.

MR. BUNTLING.

Real friends o' mine, you know, Chicagomen.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Friends truly were they, to have turned thee thus!

MR. BUNTLING.

Lemme explain . . . we talked about oletimes.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Old times! new mournful times have fallen on me!

MR. BUNTLING.

Oh, come, now, don' put on sushawfulairs.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Alonzo, thou art gazed on with contempt.

MR. BUNTLING.

Don' look at me like that. I bossthisball.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Thou boskest it ! O anguish ! O despair !

MR. BUNTLING.

I bossthisball. I saysoanditstrue.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Still more his words play truant with his tongue.

MR. BUNTLING.

Come, drop those airs, or else I'll giveyeaway.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Give me away ! O wild vernacular !

MR. BUNTLING.

I'll tell these fine folks how I married yer.

MRS. BUNTLING.

O horror ! Pause, Alonzo, ere too late !

MR. BUNTLING.

Ladies and gemmen, this good wifeomine
I met one day justwennyone years ago,

Before Chicago was a greatbigplace.
Her mother was a ladyomyownheart ;
She hadn't any frills or furbelows,
But kept a nice respec'able candystore
Not far from where the Grand Pacifotel
Is now located . . . Anastasia helped
Tend customers and I droptintoget
Candies for Martha Stout, anothergirl
That I was sweeton though I didntlove.
But when I'd spent adollarormaybemore,
I found I fancied Anastasia best,
And so I . . .

MRS. BUNTLING.

Guests, all thronging curious,
With lips pursed tight as though from occult
mirth,
I pray ye pass toward yonder supper-room,
Nor heed this drivelling and insensate tale
Told by one pitifully in his cups !
Pass on, I do beseech of ye, pass on !

Ah, woe is me, that strive to make ye pass,
Yet witness only your blank hostile stares,
Unmerciful as when the suppliant hand
Would strive to plead with the hot lightning's lip !
Ye bear not with me ; ye are obdurate ;
Ye gaze with uncompassionating eyes
At this my shame, nor leave me to its pang,
Alone, unnoted, while ye blithely eat.
Sure, yonder spreads the appetizing board,
Loaded with dainties of surpassing price.
Ye belles, ye wall-flowers, Knickerbocker swells,
Yea, Anglomaniacs, gossips, gluttons, too,
Retire, and leave me with my foolish lord !

CHORUS.

We have heard the turgid talk of your Alonzo ;
We are scandalized that he should carry on so ;
We allow it is our bounden task to leave you
With the husband who can thus annoy and grieve
you ; .
Yet in spite of dishes cooked with costly dressing,

We confess, though quite ashamed for thus confessing,

That deserting supper's charms we still must tarry
And observe you scold the man you chose to marry.
His behavior, we admit, is very awful,
His disclosures, we acknowledge, are unlawful ;
But his entrance, with dishevelled hair and collar,
We will grant we'd not have missed for many a dollar.

It is not that we have sought your entertainment
With a wish to see you placed in such arraignment,

But when private woes appear like placards pasted,
We prefer to leave your supper still untasted.

MRS. BUNTLING.

I scarce can believe what I hear;

Your cruelty fills me with fear.

Do I find you conceding

That this is good-breeding,

At family troubles to sneer ?

CHORUS.

Exception we venture to make,
Aggrieved by your signal mistake.

If thus you accuse us
You sadly abuse us,
And sombre resentment awake.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Then why do ye stoutly remain
To criticise and to disdain,
When surely 'twere kinder
To heed my reminder
And sip my expensive champagne ?

CHORUS.

Although your request is deplored,
Its claim is by no means ignored ;
Yet should we desert you,
Perchance he might hurt you,
This loudly inebriate lord.

MRS. BUNTLING.

I am not afraid in the least ;
It were best your anxiety ceased ;
For I shall soon tame him
And thoroughly shame him,
When once you have fared to the feast.

MR. BUNTLING.

The truth of the whole affair is
That she means all she says for a quiz ;
I'm perfec'ly able,
By no means unstable,
And game for a bolleofizz.

CHORUS.

We cannot in reason deny
Your force to oppose and defy,
And if you continue
Such masculine sinew,
Your chance of success we descry.

MR. BUNTLING.

A wife should her husband obey,
As only a fool would gainsay,
 But when I first wed her
 My wife took a header,
And kicked half her harness away.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Absurd is the figure you cut,
Assuming that swagger and strut ;
 Your horrid condition
 Will harm your position
And make you society's butt.

MR. BUNTLING.

Who cares what society thinks ?
I don't give her twenty good winks ;
 I rattle my money
 And laugh at how funny
She looks when she poses and prinks.

CHORUS.

His words have a much clearer flow
Than those we heard not long ago ;
As might be expected,
His wits are collected,
And greater sobriety show.

MR. BUNTLING.

Position I do not applaud ;
'Tis an empty and meaningless gaud ;
In Europe I told it
How lightly I hold it,
But here I esteem it a fraud.

MRS. BUNTLING.

O guests, I beseech, ere too late,
That you all will consider his state
As that of one blindly
Discoursing unkindly,
From causes I need not relate.

MR. BUNTLING.

Don't mind Anastasia's talk;
My statements her wrath cannot balk.
You've no more suspicion
Of grandeur patrician
Than cheese has resemblance to chalk.

CHORUS.

This diatribe does not appall;
It rouses contempt (that is all)
To see you exulting
Because of insulting
The guests at your own Buntling Ball.

MR. BUNTLING.

I did not insult you a bit;
My motive was proper and fit.
Your ancestors landed
With far more expanded
Ideas than your snobberies hit.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Retire, I pray of you, maltreated guests,
To where the untasted supper waits your heed.

MR. BUNTLING.

Cry down, if so ye will, the Buntling Ball !
Who cares what dainty discontent ye wreak
On me and mine ? Who cares what bitter things
Ye scornfully assert ? Erewhile in drink,
I now am sobered by your bitter smiles,
Though left with courage of such potency
That I dare speak my mind and say my say.
This Ball is Anastasia's Ball alone.
Hateful as feels the close tense garb I wear,
Do I hold all your brummagem parade.
Hateful I hold your unrepiblican
Conceits of caste in our Republic grand.
Hateful I hold your liveries, arms and crests,
Hateful your truckling lackeys, hateful all
Your traits and uses un-American.
For I was reared in patriotic scorn

Of those who do not reverence this dear land
As freedom's noblest effort yet on earth.
Perfect I do not dare to name her; still,
She is nearer pure perfection by great strides
Than any realm the Old World may boast of now.
Her faults are mighty; mighty her virtues too.
But ye with rash indifference feed her faults;
Ye strive to arouse in manners, morals, creeds,
Those very vices of display and pride
Our commonweal was wrought to crush and spurn.
Ye are all our brave forefathers fought against;
Ye are self-convicted foes of equal rights,
True liberty and fine democracy.
I gaze upon my wife, so fatally
Enchanted by your spells, and almost hate
This power of wealth I won by honest toil,
Since thus its gain enslaves her to your rule.
Ah me! it is not many years ago
That Anastasia, in her Western home,
Met cheerfully her daily manual tasks,
A willing housewife, pleased at decent thrift.

When first we married, neither thought to hire
A servant, but with unobjecting zeal
Our food was cooked by Anastasia's hand.
Then later, with increased prosperity,
Our Jane being born, in sober conference
We chose the novel luxury of a cook.
But many a month succeeded ere we sought
The larger luxury of a chambermaid.
And notwithstanding all the gold that came
Pouring from Pork through other later years,
I think that our dear Jane was full seventeen
While yet we dined at noon and supped at six.
Then Anastasia's heart ambitious grew ;
She fain would ape the airs of folk she saw
In street or theatre ; we must change our life ;
Dry-goods of costly kind must clothe her form ;
She thought our basement no fit dining-room ;
She thought our upper dining-room too small ;
She thought our modest house ridiculous ;
She thought a spacious mansion more in taste ;
She wanted servants, footmen, carriages ;

And last of all she clamored stubbornly
That we should go abroad and marry Jane
To some great duke or prince. I, like a fool,
Yielding in all things, yielded finally
To this determined whim. We went abroad,
But did not marry Jane; for our loved child,
Simple in soul and full of homely tastes,
Lacked art or wish to marry save where lay
Her gentle preference, her maiden love . . .
But where is Jane, my daughter, whom I named?
I see her not, poor dear dissembling one,
Who oft has told me how her mother's course
Of cold and callous worldliness would rouse
Her own unspoken pain and secret tears.

MRS. BUNTLING.

'Tis false that Jane hath ever thus confessed!
'Tis false that I am what thy dreadful words
Presume to paint me, spurred by reckless drink,
And sure of swift repentance when the bane
Of this vile wine-engendered mood shall pass.

SEMICHORUS.

You mentioned your Jane,
And she comes this way.
Her face, it is plain,
Is by no means gay.

She looks, on the contrary, serious,
And also a trifle imperious,
As though there had lain
Some distress on her brain,
To its proper repose deleterious.

O Jane, why should comfort forsake you so,
And dark discontent overtake you so?
Why are you dejected
With gloom unexpected,
And what can have happened to make you so?
Your father, of course, has been rude to us,
In language uncivil and crude to us;
But you were aloof,
And received not the proof
Of how savagely frank was his mood to us.

Your mother, no doubt with sincerity,
Regrets his exceeding temerity,
 But this would not place
In your virginal face
An expression of so much severity.

SEMICHORUS.

Who is he beside you standing
With the air of one demanding
Your reciprocal affection
While he offers full protection ?
Either we have wrongly noted,
Or we saw him thus devoted
Ere you left us, though serener
In his general demeanor.
Does he offer explanation
For your pensive perturbation ?
All through him are you so harassed,
Pale, defiant, yet embarrassed ?
Have you turned a willing student
In the school of deeds imprudent ?

Have you shown him tokens tender
Of your heart's complete surrender?
Are you now about to utter
What shall make your parents flutter
With its unrestrained expression
Of idolatrous confession?

JANE.

O chanting voices, I detect cold scorn
Below the melodies that ye lightly weave.
Ye therefore will I answer not, but look
Toward them alone whose pardon I would win ;
Yea, pardon, since my new sole hope lies here,
And deep will be my sorrow if it fail.

SEMICHORUS.

Soon in free and full exposure
We shall hear some strange disclosure ;
For, O Jane, as we behold you,
Wraps and sealskins now enfold you ;
And, reluctant to disparage,
Still we scent a secret marriage.

JANE.

Parents, 'twere best if I should use quick speech
And let what wounds I deal be dealt with speed,
So saving pangs more gradual truth would wake.
This youth you gaze on here beside me now
Is named Leander Briggs, and I have sworn
But recently before a clergyman
To love, to honor, and obey this youth
Till death his eyes or mine shall veil with night.
Yea, he and I, irrevocably wed,
Crave mercy for this matrimonial step
Which love, the all-swaying force of human hearts,
Hath fondly urged and wrought on us to take.

MR. BUNTLING.

Jane Buntling, what mad jest is this of thine?

JANE.

Jane Briggs that was Jane Buntling mercy pleads.

MR. BUNTLING.

I think some dream plays trickster with my brain,

JANE.

Awake thou art in every fleshly sense.

MR. BUNTLING.

What man is this, then, O unnatural child ?

JANE.

One whom to love I found most natural.

MR. BUNTLING.

Thou canst not long have known him ere to-night.

JANE.

Three happy weeks are limit of my love.

MR. BUNTLING.

What knowledge hast thou of his worldly place ?

JANE.

He is a dry-goods clerk of slender means.

MR. BUNTLING.

Infatuate girl ! How often had ye met ?

JANE.

Thrice ere to-night. Soul quickly speaks to soul.

MR. BUNTLING.

O victim to a shrewd adventurer!

LEANDER BRIGGS.

Nay, never that, though dry-goods clerk am I,
Even as thy beauteous child hath lately told.

No purer passion yet has ruled a life
Than this which now entralls, and evermore,
Till death and life be self-same, shall entrall
My individual homage, act and thought.

O elderly paternal gentleman,
My father-in-law compulsory, deem not
That thou hast gold enough in bank or bond
To richer make my loyalty and love.

Nay, shouldst thou sternly bid thy child depart,
Disfranchised of all right to call thee sire,
Abominated, disinherited,
Declared exempt and alien equally
From ties of blood or lucre posthumous,

I, not the less, I, plain Leander Briggs,
A simple clerk of Meares and Company,
Would hear thy verdict with no vulgar grief
Like that the baffled fortune-hunter feels,
But bravely I would seek to mitigate
The sharp results of thy regretted wrath,
And treasure, if 'twere possible, with more
Devout protection her my sireless bride.
Hear me, O elderly respected one
(And while I call thee elderly methinks
The term injustice, with such youthful bloom
Thy fresh cheek mantles, and thy virile eye
So sparkles with proud manhood's vivid fire),
It would not irk if Jane were dispossessed
Of all prospective share in thy great gains,
Did I know surely that her valued self
Were mine through years to guard and to adore.

MR. BUNTLING.

Thou hast indeed a facile tongue, slim clerk,
To prate so glibly of my youthful bloom

And sparkling eye. Were I a vain man, now,
Or one who set much heed on lapse of years,
Desiring to look younger than I am,
Perchance thy skilful flattery might bestow
Some sort of tolerance on thy misdeed
And hers.—But let such empty nonsense pass . . .
I am elderly, as thou didst own erewhile,—
Yet not so marvellous elderly in sooth—
And as for handsome . . . well, I *do* claim skin
Of bloomy tint, eyes not so dull as stones,
And locks less grizzly than—But pah! forbear
To dream that paltry compliments like these
Can blunt the poignant justice of my rage.
Thou hast done shamelessly and thievishly.
Nor thou nor she must look upon my face
After to-night ; ye are banished, both of you,
Each deep at fault; one grossly treacherous,
And one a prodigy of ingratitude.

JANE.

O father, heed thy supplicating Jane!

I would have told thee all three weeks agone,
When first, in purchasing pink silk, I saw
And loved unchangeably Leander Briggs,
Save that a fear of what mamma might learn
Deterred and hindered my confiding wish.
For thou wert ever lenient to thy Jane;
I do remember (ah, so thankfully !)
How oft thy hand would intercede for me
Between my shrinking girlish form and that
Implacable maternal slipper, poised
To wring the bitter shriek from helpless lips.
And ever would I bring thee what I loved
In those dear vanished days Chicagoan—
A toy, a doll, a book of pictured rhymes,
A shining apple, rubicund, rotund,
Seeking thy praises and approving smiles.
So, now, my cherished father, do I bring
That which I love in later different hours,
My true Leander; for I know him true
As birds know true the first warm hints of Spring,
As trees know true the mellowing sun-ray's thrill,

As violets, hid beneath the vernal mould,
Know true the south wind's voice that lures their
blooms.

He is a clerk at Meares and Company's,
Monotonously measuring long yards
Of different stuffs, from tulle to calico,
From tape to lace. But ah, his manly mind
Partakes not of these trivial daily tasks.
O father, hear me out before you close
Impenetrable doors upon us both.
Leander, while he measures yard on yard
Of universal fabric, hoards unseen
Below the counter where he deftly serves,
A volume of most intellectual sort,
No less a volume, O my father dear,
Than that Proverbial Philosophy
Of Tupper, which I clearly recollect
Thyself didst love to read upon the lounge,
When tea was over, ere thy final doze.
This book Leander reads at stolen whiles,
And loves the massive wisdom it contains,

And strives to shape his conduct to its lore,
Regarding it as filled with maxims rare,
And sometimes murmuring o'er its precious lines
Unconsciously, while heartless customers
Haggle and barter, and the great store hums,
And all the worldly babbling mercantile
Resounds about his pure poetic ears.

MR. BUNTLING.

Nay, art thou sure that he loves Tupper well?

JANE.

O joy to see that smile illume thy face!

MR. BUNTLING.

Young man, dost thou love Tupper's golden verse?

LEANDER BRIGGS.

Next to my Jane my Tupper do I prize.

MR. BUNTLING.

I did not think to pardon thee; yet now,

Regarding thee with closer scrutiny,
I see thou hast a meditative brow,
As sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought
Which doubtless thou hast found in Tupper's page.
Well, since thou art the husband of my Jane,
And since one mutual cult I recognize
Between thyself and me, thus much I deign
To pardon, and no more: it is that thou
Shalt meet me in fair social intercourse
To-morrow and discuss that lofty bard.
Till then, thy hand . . . what afterward shall hap
Is hidden deep in awful scrolls of fate.

LEANDER BRIGGS.

Oh, thanks, propitiated father-in-law !

MR. BUNTLING.

Prove that thou art full worthy ere thou boast.

LEANDER BRIGGS.

That will I prove ere sinks another sun.

CHORUS.

O sombre ending of the Bunting Ball !
O ruin of hopes by strong ambition fed !
Where shall proud Anastasia hide at all
The droop of her humiliated head ?
Surely the ignominy seemed enough
Her madness to arouse
When her aggressive spouse
Came reeling hither, bibulously gruff
With inarticulate platitudes about her marriage-
vows.
Ah, yes, Alonzo, tumbling in unruly
Among the assembled throng,
With no more cultivation than a Coolie,
And with his equilibrium all gone wrong,
He was a nuisance and an outrage truly,
And fit for an exterminating thong.
Rarely in social records, high or low,
Has any mortal man
Played worse barbarian
And made an entrance more *malapropos*.

Rarely has any dame
Been put to keener shame
Than hapless Anastasia by the glow
Of his broad-blown and vinous visage, by
His alcoholic eye,
And by the inhospitable impudence, whose flow
Tingled through every nerve of our punctilio.
But what, moreover, shall we say of Jane,
With her preposterous pranks,
Her reprehensible disdain
Of proper filial duty, filial thanks ?
How shall we rate her attitude inane ?
Did lunacy compel it, willy-nilly ?
Alas ! we think her eminently sane,
Although superlatively silly.
Disgraceful is her conduct, thus to trammel
Maternal efforts that she clearly saw.
O Jane, you are the last tormenting straw,
And fit to break the back of *any* camel !
Besides, although of limited capacity,
As far as appertains to matters mental,

You must allow your positive mendacity
To be deliberate, not accidental.
Instead of your papa's forgiveness gentle,
The fiat that shall wholly disinherit
You very richly merit.
Instead of his "I-bless-you" style conventional,
You thoroughly deserve a Harlem flat
As payment for duplicity intentional.
A Harlem flat, and rather small at that,
With complicated smells of frying fat
And washing-suds ascendant.
A little peevish kitchen-range that smokes
Because the chimney just above it chokes,
And one poor frowzy girl for your attendant.
Oh, yes, most faulty Jane,
You should henceforth refrain
From sealskin sacques and silk resplendent.
Your future lot should prove
If this fantastic love
Would long remain,
Romantic Jane,

In all its charming throes,
One sweet *couleur-de-rose*,
With poverty about your dear neck pendent !
You soon would find out whether
This husband of your choice
Would pull not somewhat stoutly at his tether
And lose his dove-like voice
When served an ill-cooked supper,
And growl about the life you lived together,
In spite of all fine precepts from his venerated
Tupper.

JANE.

Your random mockeries leave me scathless quite.

LEANDER BRIGGS.

Disdain them, since thy sire has pardoned us.

JANE.

Still could no Harlem flat destroy our love !

LEANDER BRIGGS.

Not though its attic roof leaked floods of rain !

JANE.

Mamma sets gloomful eyes upon us both.

LEANDER BRIGGS.

The quivering of her lip is leonine.

JANE.

I think her silence will end terribly.

MR. BUNTLING.

Right art thou, Jane. My pardon is not hers.

JANE.

Leander, let us kneel, beseeching grace.

MRS. BUNTLING.

Kneel not . . . I did believe, a brief while since,
That some black nightmare thralled me dreadfully,
And that I waking would discern the snare
Thus woven of sleep's fell visionary imps.
But all such easy credence vanishes,

And I am left to front the galling fact.
What, did ye look for wrath? No wrath have I,
But only sorrow past the reach of tears.
That which is done stands irreversible;
The Jane I deemed my Jane is some weird Jane
Who being my daughter was a hypocrite,
A cheat, a fraud, and therefore not my Jane
At all at any time since girlish years.
I might have borne calamities like these
Bravelier, if dealt not by a husband's hand,
Or daughter's. For the ambition I had nursed
Was equally to advance myself and them.
The glory of my accomplishment should fling
Its light on their two heads as on my own.
We should have made a trio of leadership,
And ye that here have witnessed my defeat
Would have beheld my threefold victory . . .
But all that roseate dream is melted now;
I am betrayed, yet not by outward foes;
My household, yea, the nearest of my kin,
Rise up and slay me . . . I had planned for Jane

A marriage of such haughty eminence
That foreign journals gladly from our own
Would copy all the details of its pomp.
Who now shall chronicle this vulgar flight,
These recreant spousals, but with jest and scoff ?
The Buntling Ball, O thou perfidious child,
Hath turned thy marriage feast. Go, drink and eat
With him thy father's easy pardon joys.
Nor viand nor foaming vintage is for me,
But sorrowing solitude through many days—
Perchance remorse, repentance . . . who shall say ?
For I have wrongfully adored the power
Of wealth and sought to use it as a stair
Whereby ambition's feet might scale renown.
But peradventure comfort still remains
My suffering spirit through the exercise
Of noble and unstinted charities
Hereafter, whose consolatory balm,
While healing other wounds, may heal mine own.

CHORUS.

Lady, we pity thy supreme distress,

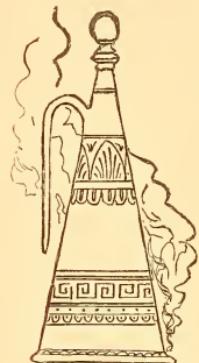
While solemnly departing, each and all ;
 Yea, while departing wholly supperless,
 Amazed that such disturbance should befall.

Yet deeds once done eternally are
 done ;

The Fates are three, and purblind
 man is one.

O dire events the Fates alone
 could guess !

O sombre ending of the Buntling
 Ball !



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